

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

luxury and prodigality of his court that he would have taxed all Christendom, had he been able, to supply the funds. He wasted the treasures of the Church in lending money to the French kings to aid them in their wars with England, and in the advancement of his kindred, filling the Sacred College with men of his own stamp and country, godless and worldly, many of them of evil and dissolute life. If Petrarca is to be believed, the riotous licentiousness of these younger cardinals was but too well matched in the senile debauchery of their elders who wore that hat, in Dante's phrase, *che fur di male in peggio si travasa*, "which doth but pass from bad vessel to worse." "Our two Clements," said a French prelate of the Curia (probably the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Philippe de Cabassole) to Petrarca, "have destroyed more of the Church in a few years than seven of your Gregories could restore in many centuries."¹

In his three terrible sonnets against Avignon, Petrarca has painted for all time the state of the society that gathered round Clement's throne. But in one of his Latin poems, the sixth eclogue entitled *Pastorum pathos*, St. Peter, in the guise of the old shepherd Pamphilus, rebukes his hireling successor Mitio, who is Clement himself, for the desolation of the pastures and the destruction of the flocks, only to find him brazen-faced and exulting in his shame.² Even more frightful is the picture of the corruption of the papal court which the poet has left us in his *Epistolae sine titulo*^ albeit the note of exaggeration and rhetorical inflation is manifest. "What difference is there," he asks, "between those enemies of Christ, who betrayed Him with a kiss and bent the knee before Him in mockery, and the Pharisees of our time ? That same Christ, whose name they exalt night and day with hymns of praise, whom they robe in purple and gold, whom they load with jewels, whom they salute and adore prostrate—that very same do they not buy and sell on earth like merchandise ? As it were blindfold that He may not

¹ *Ejttst. sine titulo*, XIX. Cf. M. Villani, iii. 43 ; Benvenuto da Imola, *Comeatuta*, v. p. 289. a *Egksa* VI.